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Gen Z Speak Out: Job Market Challenges and Economic Shifts

These varied experiences reflect the complex and often challenging landscapes of today's job market, where success often depends on persistence, strategic career choices, and sometimes, sheer luck.

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Boomers Emphasize Experience, Expertise in Their Approach to Voting



By Sharon Lewis



SCAN TO LISTEN

With an average of over 50 years of voting experience, baby boomers, the generation of Americans born from 1946 to 1964, are vocal and willing to share their expertise and knowledge on the importance of voting.

The Cleveland Observer spoke with four baby boomers, ages 63 to 75, about their opinions and political affiliations.

Pat Bauer, 71, is currently a Republican who switched from the Democratic Party in her 60s. Bauer is a Cleveland resident who retired from the former Parma Community General Hospital (now known as University Hospitals Parma Medical Center) and worked a total of 38 years as a licensed practical nurse, a child life worker, a coordinator of non-medical home health, and as activity director of the ElderCenter. Bauer loves to learn and takes classes. She does yoga, tai chi, and cardio drumming, is active in her church, and enjoys socializing with family and friends.

Clifton Jones, 75, is a Euclid

resident originally from Detroit. He is a business owner and caregiver. Jones has strong moral values, loves his family, and is a deacon at his church. His political beliefs align more with those of an Independent voter, but for the Nov. 5 general election, Jones is leaning towards the Democrats.

Bill Furey, 63, has worked in electronics distribution for 35 years. He is a veteran of the U.S. Marines and a Twinsburg, City Council member. Furey resides with his wife of 30 years and has an adult son. He plays golf and has participated in numerous political campaigns – both his own

and those of others. Furey is a big fan of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana.

Lessie Milton Jones is a baby boomer, an attorney, and a Westlake resident. Milton Jones' political affiliation is Democrat. She is known for her passion for justice and involvement in causes that aid the less fortunate and animal welfare. Milton Jones sits on the board of several charitable organizations and has a solid Christian faith. Milton Jones is an avid reader and prides herself on staying abreast of current events.

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Pat Bauer, Cleveland resident



Clifton Jones, Euclid resident



Bill Furey, Twinsburg resident



Lessie Milton Jones, Westlake resident

Now-N-Later: How Voting Today Affects Tomorrow's Generations



By TC Lewis



SCAN TO LISTEN

In a world full of deep fakes, fake news, news burnout and information overload, it can be easy to be overwhelmed by the increasingly chaotic state of American politics. In this election, apathy poses the greatest threat to Black voters. By taking a longer, broader view at the impact today's vote may have on tomorrow's Black America, perhaps the apathy of now can be transformed into passion and enthusiasm for later generations of Black citizens.

A Howard University poll found that over one-third of Black voters felt their vote didn't matter. In the words of National HBCU Coordinator of the Fair Election Center's campus vote project,

Dominique Mitchell, "Our votes matter. If it did not matter, why would they try to suppress it?"

A concentrated effort is being put into voter suppression in the form of voter roll purges, ID requirements for registered voters, redistricting to dilute Black voting blocks, and imposing limits to voting hours and/or early voting.

According to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, "voter suppression tactics... aim to essentially make voting inaccessible." These tactics disproportionately impact low-income communities of color.

The National Education Association says race-based voter suppression is the 21st century form of Jim Crow.

Kimeka Campbell, co-founder of the Young Professionals of Color, a collective in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, said "Many Black Americans are disillusioned with politics because of pledges made to their communities that weren't delivered on."



"I hear people say, 'Why would I vote? These people don't have my interests at heart, and I don't want to subject myself to thinking about it,'" Campbell said.

The truth is, Black votes matter.

Reports from the Center for American Progress, the Democracy Fund, the Brookings Institution and the Bipartisan Policy Center state that Black voters are among the most stable voting bloc in politics. Additionally, the Black vote has proved to be decisive in presidential elections, often tipping the balance in favor of candidates

who prioritize the concerns of Black voters. In 2020, Black women were critical to ensuring a Biden-Harris victory, stopping a dreaded second term for President Trump.

At the time of publication, both major party candidates are polling within 1% of each other, so this year more than ever, every vote counts.

With Project 2025 looming on the horizon as the perceived gameplan of the Trump 2024 campaign, Black voters may once again make the difference in

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Boomers Approach Voting From front page

Each registered to vote between the ages of 18 and 22, and have voted in nearly every election since becoming registered voters omitting a few local elections. None have missed the opportunity to vote in a presidential election.

The Cleveland Observer (TCO) asked each of the baby boomers questions about their voting habits and the shifts happening toward the general election in November.

How did voter turnout differ by age in 2020?

According to USA Facts, youth voter turnout increased the most of any age group, rising by 10 percentage points compared with the previous presidential election. It's the second federal election with an increase in youth voter turnout. In the 2018 midterms, youth voter turnout almost doubled from 2014, yet young voters still turn out the least of all age groups. Seniors turn out at the highest rate, with about 72% voting in 2020, an increase of four percentage points from 2016.

TCO: Do you plan to vote in the 2024 presidential election?

FUREY: Yes.

MILTON JONES: Yes.

BAUER: Yes.

JONES: Yes.

TCO: Could anything keep you from voting in the upcoming Election?

All responded: Resounding "No." Jones added, "Death would be the only thing that could stop me because it is that important."

Almost across the board, the importance of voting was stressed in their households when they were growing up, perhaps signaling to parents that this conversation should take place early to foster the belief that voting is essential.

TCO: Have you ever discussed voting or your political ideologies with a member of the younger generations (Gen Z, Millennials, etc.)?

MILTON JONES: I've talked to my nieces and nephews in their 20s. I have cautioned them not to be blindsided by the idea that we can all get along.

JONES: I tell them what my father told me. Participate by educating yourself, voting, talking with people about relationships, listening, and sharing. I've talked to my granddaughter and several other young people.

BAUER: I share my thoughts and have talked to people aged 17 -22.

TCO: Have you ever participated in a Political campaign?

FUREY: Yes. I have participated in more political campaigns than I can count.

BAUER: No, but I will be working the polls this November.

MILTON JONES: I worked on political campaigns for former Cleveland Mayor Michael White.

JONES: No, because I prefer to keep my volunteerism private.

TCO: How do you feel about President Biden stepping down and deciding not to run for reelection?

JONES: It was an unselfish act for the good of the country.

BAUER: I see it as him needing to step down because of diminished capacity. Kamala Haris' running is good for the Democrats, and because of Obama's support, she will be well-received.

MILTON JONES: I initially thought that Biden stepping down would derail the Democratic Party. But in hindsight, it has galvanized the Democratic Party.

FUREY: Biden was pushed out by the shadow government once he had to spend two minutes without a teleprompter, and the world became aware of the coverup.

According to Vox, an online news platform, "Voter turnout tends to rise with age, and baby boomers and the silent generation, made up of Americans born between 1928 and 1945, still vote at higher rates than younger Americans. While turnout rates for millennials soared, just 42 percent of eligible millennials turned out to vote, compared with 64 percent of baby boomers and older voters. Yet, due to dwindling numbers, baby boomers cast only 36 percent of ballots in 2018, the generation's lowest share in a midterm election since 1986."

"2018 also marked the first time more than half — 55 percent — of Generation X voters showed up to midterm elections."

Next was one of the most critical questions posed.

TCO: What is the most severe threat to our democracy?

JONES: It is the subtle racism pervasive in our society.

FUREY: It is illegal immigration and the two-tiered justice system.

MILTON JONES: It is Donald Trump.

BAUER: The border and the economy.

TCO: What advice would you give the younger generations about voting?

The sentiment was similar but slightly different depending on ethnicity and party lines.

FUREY: Do not let teachers and non-parents push you around and indoctrinate you. As a Marine veteran, people have died to defend the right/honor. Be informed and participate in the process, or do not complain when those in power implement policies you do not support.

MILTON JONES: I don't feel that telling the younger generation that people died so they could vote resonates today. Many young people have friends of different races and ethnicities, and many have never experienced racism firsthand, so there is no filter on their lens. My advice is when you think you have nothing else that you can do to overcome unfairness, voting should be the first thing that comes to mind. Reflecting historically, we must understand that our political opponents could take our right to vote in this current political climate, where our history is negated and removed from the history books.

JONES: we should all stay involved, vote our conscience, and read enough to stay informed.

BAUER: Every single vote counts. It is a responsibility and a privilege to vote. There is no better way for your voice to be heard than with your vote.

If there is any truth to the adage that "with age comes wisdom," we can learn much from this generation. As you might expect, opinions vary based on life experience and party affiliations. Still, the resounding sentiment is that every person of voting age should register and vote in the upcoming presidential election on Tuesday, Nov. 5.

Sharon Lewis graduated from John Carroll University with a Bachelor of Arts in Speech Communications and holds a Master of Education from Cleveland State University

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PUBLISHER

Ronald A. Calhoun

MANAGING EDITOR

Imani Capri

EDITORS

T.C. Lewis

Marva B. White

Rosie Palfy Print Editor

PARTNERS

Neighborhood Connections
The Cleveland Foundation
Euclid/Collinwood Observer

ADVERTISING

info@theclevelandobserver.com

ADVISORY BOARD

Sheila Ferguson,
Ron Harris, Devon Jones,
Mark Silverberg,

PRINT LAYOUT / GRAPHICS

Ron Calhoun

info@cleobserver.com
11459 Mayfield Road #302
Cleveland, Ohio 44106
(216) 236-8081

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Now-N-Later: How Voting Today Affects Tomorrow's Generations

From front page

November. Analysis conducted by the National Urban League finds that Project 2025 aims to dismantle federal agencies that protect the interests of everyday Americans.

The Urban League reported that the time and efforts invested “to make the education system equitable, hold polluters accountable, and expand public health are at risk of complete erasure. In addition, thousands of government jobs are at risk of being lost, many in our community.”

Many of the resources residents may take for granted, namely community-based health services, neighborhood recreation centers, discrimination protections, workplace safety regulations, federal labor standards and environmental protections may be eliminated and forgotten if voter apathy persists. This notion exemplifies the impact voting has on our daily lives and in the lives of our descendants.

What we decide in the voting booth will be the blueprint for the future.

In this election, as in every presidential election, much more than who occupies the White House is at stake. Voting is not just your right, it's your responsibility to future generations. The (albeit limited) freedoms our ancestors voted for, like integration, public education, public healthcare and disability rights are under attack. When our ancestors

voted for these things, they were all longshots, and many of them didn't live to see the fruits of their own labor, but we still benefit today from the things they voted for back then.

They faced the same choice we face today: speak or be silent. What world will your votes pass on to our future Black Americans? Will you fight today for the citizens of tomorrow, or will you be silent?

At the Democratic National Convention in August, Michelle Obama called the country to honor the legacy of our ancestors.

“Our fate is in our hands . . . We have the power to turn our country away from the fear, division and smallness of the past. We have the power to marry our hope with our action. We have the power to pay forward the love, sweat and sacrifice of our mothers and fathers and all those who came before us. We did it before, y'all, and we sure can do it again,” Obama said.

TC Lewis is a media professional and an aspiring cybersecurity analyst. A graduate of Kent State University, TC has worked in local media spaces, most notably as an on-air radio host, producer and program director for five years at WOJU 95.9 FM. In her free time, TC enjoys indulging in reality television, podcasting and micro-farming.

The Cleveland Observer

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SCAN TO REGISTER

Be The Change Agent Be An Observer

Voter Registration Deadlines



By TC Lewis

The contest for presidential power between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump has taken center stage in the American psyche. Just as important as it is to decide who one will vote for, it is equally important to make sure one can actually vote when the time comes. With the Nov. 5 general election coming close, Ohioans should be aware of important voter registration deadlines.

When and How Do I Register to Vote?

The voter registration deadline in Ohio for the Nov. 5 General Election is Oct 7. Eligible residents have three options for

voter registration – by mail, in person, and online.

Voter registration forms are online at the Ohio Secretary of State's website. They can be picked up at any local county board of elections, public libraries, public high schools, any BMV location, and offices of designated agencies, including the Department of Job and Family Services.

Mailed forms must be postmarked no later than Oct. 7. Hand-delivered registrations must be received at the registrant's county board of elections office on or before Oct. 7.

Online voter registrations can be completed at www.voteohio.gov. An Ohio driver's license or ID card number, name, date of birth, address, and the last four digits of your social security number are required.

Who is Eligible to Vote?

Eligible voters are U.S. citizens who meet their state's residency requirements, are 18 years old on or before election day, and are registered to vote by their

state's registration deadline.

Under Ohio law, a registrant must be a permanent resident in a “fixed place of habitation.” Unhoused residents who are regular shelter inhabitants may use that location for voting purposes.

A college student may use their Ohio school residence for voter registration purposes if the student does not intend to return to a different permanent address.

Residents who have misdemeanor convictions, and those with felony convictions who are on probation or parole or who have completed their jail sentence are eligible to vote. Persons incarcerated for felony convictions are not eligible to vote or to register to vote.

Absentee and Early Voting

Ohio voters may choose to vote in any election conveniently from home by requesting an absentee ballot. Requests must be made no later than seven days before the election – Oct. 29. Mailed absentee ballots must

be postmarked by Nov. 4., and hand-delivered absentee ballots are due at the local county board of elections before 7:30 p.m. which is the closing time of the polls.

Absentee ballot request forms are available online and, once completed and signed, should be mailed to the voter's county board of elections.

Those who wish to vote in person before election day can cast an absentee ballot at their county board of elections from Oct. 8 to Nov. 3.

To verify and update your voter registration, and for more information on general registration guidelines, visit VoteOhio.org.

TC Lewis graduate of Kent State University, TC has worked in local media, as an on-air radio host, producer and program director for five years at WOJU 95.9 FM

Poetry: Covid-Iy Traumatized



By M. White



I really used to go out far more frequently
Whether by myself or if my crew was with me
We'd pack into some of the world's smallest spots
We'd be laughin', close dancin', sweaty and hot
Samplin' each other's drinks and appetizers too
Taking selfies of our group before our time was through
Recapping the night's events on the drive home
I'd smile and thank God I ain't hafta be alone
But now, I'd much rather just chill in my flat
Just me and the fam, and I'm cool with that
This change was not implemented by me
It was drastic and happened quite abruptly
A virus grew into an epidemic
Within months the entire world had a pandemic
We endured turmoil from misinformation
Paralyzing fear, separation, isolation
Deep nostril swabs uncomfortable at best
We waited for results before we could rest
Gun-shaped Thermometers pointed at our heads
Normalized and desensitized reactions to guns and lead

Then a most unwelcome guest did intrude
Death invaded us prematurely and rude
Rapidly attacked the most vulnerable of us
Tore through our nation and made us anxious
Fear morphed into anger that changed some's air
A sneeze once rendered blessings now got a frigid glare
Six feet social distance and you'd bet not make it less
Fights over sanitizer and essentials? What a mess!
Most places were closed it was like a ghost town
Crowded scenes now empty with no one around
Front line heroes risked their lives to save others
Keepers of their nation's sisters and brothers
Some of us worked remotely, some got a check
Some used the time to rebuild and/or reflect
New crafts, hobbies and careers some did pursue
Boredom or necessity? Only they knew
With bleach I disinfected all surfaces
I used the bleach exactly for those purposes
Subjected my face to citrus-filled steam
To vaccinate or not, no middle, just extreme
All colored masks to match my fresh and fly 'fit
Oh, I was gonna be cute, but I sho' wasn't catchin' it!
Flying the friendly skies evolved to a whole 'nother level
Without gloves and a mask,

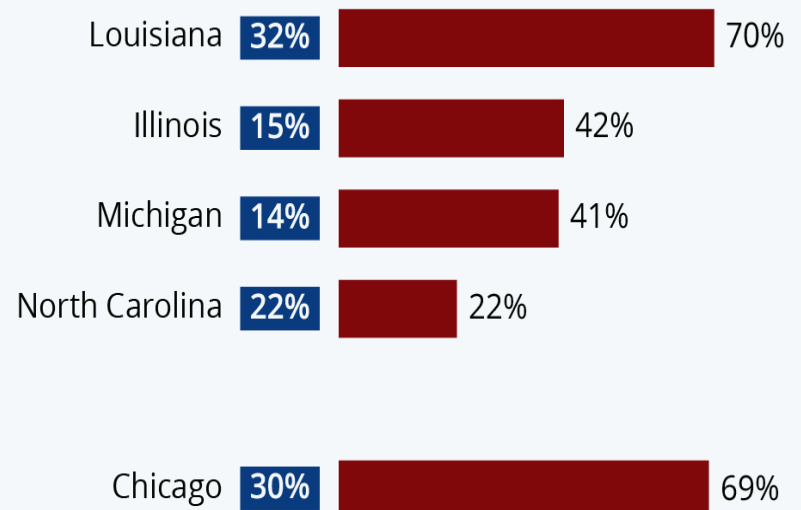
tempted the devil
The virus altered several times, and then some
We were tired, forgetting masks, some refused to even wear 'em
I lean in, to hug, but you extend to shake
How much more cacophony must humans take?
Fast forward to now, almost four years later
Can't say much has changed, at least for the greater
Self-distancing signs are now gone or worn out
Do we shake, kiss or hug? Do none when in doubt
I've got a friend who still cannot smell or taste

She says eating food for her is such a waste
I stopped wearing blue latex gloves finally
Although, you know, I did so reluctantly.
A person couldn't help but be a gaper
If he saw my mad stash of toilet paper
For me, it doesn't even matter the place
You best believe there's still a mask on this face
The harder I try to be safe and wise
The more I see I'm covid-ly traumatized.

COVID-19's Devastating Impact On African Americans

African American share of state/city populations and COVID-19 deaths (as of Apr 06, 2020)

■ Share of state/city's population ■ Share of COVID-19 deaths



Sources: 2010 Census, respective state/city health departments

The Statista "Chart of the Day", made available under the Creative Commons License CC BY-ND

Gen Z Speaks Out: Job Market Challenges and Economic Shifts



Staff Writer

Gen-Z is 1996-2012.

The current job market reveals a broad spectrum of experiences for Generation Z job seekers, from frustrating obstacles to unexpected successes, mirroring shifting economic conditions and industry trends.

Many job seekers are facing stagnant wages and limited opportunities.

"I have a degree but it's in communications and media, and most entry-level jobs pay \$15 an hour," said Izzy A., who currently works at a Sam's Club earning \$17 an hour. This discrepancy highlights the challenges faced by those with specialized degrees.

A broader economic impact was noted by Terah S.

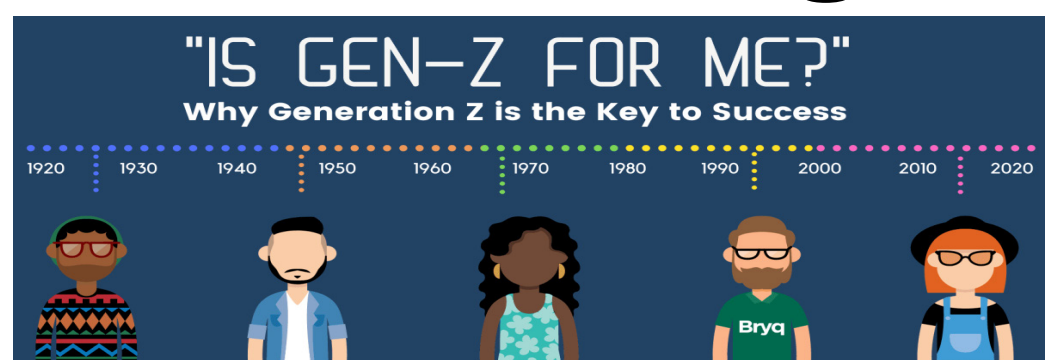
"Wages are still low and COVID made things significantly worse," Terah S. said, despite holding a master's degree in a high-demand field.

The tech industry has shown significant fluctuations.

"2019 was crazy, but lots of places were hiring. 2020 was surprisingly good, with many remote jobs. 2021 was really good, but 2022 saw a downturn. 2023 was barren, and 2024 is worse," said Kermit C., a cybersecurity professional. This volatility underscores the challenges and shifting opportunities within the tech sector.

For some, the job search has been a prolonged struggle.

"I've been unemployed for about a year and a half but not from lack of trying," said Linda S., who has faced persistent silence



from employers despite numerous applications and resume revisions.

"It's doing a number on my mental health," she said.

In contrast, others have found success through unconventional routes or strategic career moves. John L., who has extensive experience and high-level education, secured a position in insurance after fortuitously meeting an agent who needed a new account manager.

"I got extremely lucky," John L. said.

Another individual, without a college degree, achieved success in sales, progressing from a telemarketer to an account manager with a competitive salary.

"Sales is the only way out if you don't have college," they stated.

Young job seekers also face unique challenges. A 19-year-old student majoring in accounting and finance reported applying for more than 500 jobs with no success.

"It's been a pain," they said, highlighting the difficulties of balancing academic commitments with job search efforts.

These varied experiences reflect the complex and often challenging landscapes of today's job market, where success often depends on persistence, strategic career choices, and sometimes, sheer luck.

Esperanza Threads Empowers Refugees and Low-Income Communities



By Sarai Murdock



SCAN TO LISTEN

Esperanza Threads, a non-profit organization founded in 2000 by Sister Mary Eileen, provides sewing and fashion skills training to refugees, formerly incarcerated individuals, and low-income families. Located on Cleveland's west side, the organization aims to build a diverse community where individuals can learn new skills and share knowledge.

Although Sister Mary Eileen officially retired in January, she continues to volunteer with classes. Emily Tiell, the current executive director of Esperanza Threads, began her career as a caseworker at Catholic Charities Diocese of Cleveland's Migration and Refugee Services.

There, she helped refugees find employment, and her connection to Esperanza Threads began when one of her clients took a class there and later secured a job in a sewing manufacturing company. In 2021, Tiell became the executive director of Esperanza Threads.

"Sewing is a great skill for people who don't have strong English skills," Tiell said. "It allows them to support themselves and their families, and even create their own businesses."

A Safe Space to Create

Charles Poindexter, a 46-year-old student of Esperanza Threads, first connected with the organization through Emily Tiell at the Tremont Art and Culture Festival, where he was a vendor for his boutique, U.C. ME Boutique. Tiell suggested that he take sewing classes at Esperanza Threads, and Poindexter enrolled in the program.

"The space was more than just a place to learn—it was a space of art, connection, and unity," Poindexter said.

Poindexter's involvement with Esperanza Threads had a significant impact on both his career and family life. He often involves his children in his work, and his life partner, Amanda, started a small business creating crystal jewelry inspired by his passion for fashion.

After completing an eight-week sewing program, Poindexter began volunteering at Esperanza Threads and later became a board member. This role allowed him to help guide the organization's direction, support fundraising efforts, and improve the curriculum. He also launched his own upcycling and sustainable

fashion brand, Cloud Nine Couture, in November 2023.

"Collaboration is where my drive is now," Poindexter said. "I want to keep learning, sharing knowledge, and building a community of designers, artists, and crafters."

A Transformational Experience

Joseph Vuga, a 52-year-old fashion designer from South Sudan, enrolled in a three-week refresher course at Esperanza Threads to sharpen his sewing skills. Vuga, who had prior experience in sewing, found that the training at Esperanza Threads helped him integrate into American society and advance his career.

After completing the course, Vuga received a certificate and a partially subsidized sewing machine. He secured a job as



Employee Ombeni Ebila, an immigrant from Baraka, Congo, sews a T-shirt at Esperanza Threads in Cleveland June 26. (CNS/Dennis Sadowski)

a tailor at Basony and later transitioned to a role at FlexJet, a luxury private jet company. Vuga also designs and sells African garments in his personal time.

Vuga volunteers at Esperanza Threads, sharing his knowledge with current students. He emphasized the organization's ongoing support for students even after they complete the program, noting that he still receives guidance, support, and mentorship.

"Esperanza Threads is like a family," Vuga said. "They listen to your concerns and are always there to help you succeed."

Collaboration and Community

Esperanza Threads collaborates with organizations like Fashion Talks, a Cleveland-based fashion agency that hosts an annual show attended by over 700 people. In 2024, four Esperanza Threads students participated as designers in the Fashion Talks show.

Vuga participated in Fashion Talks and emphasized the importance of building connections and giving back to the community. "If people open up to me, what can I give back to society?" Vuga said.

Accessible Learning Opportunities

Esperanza Threads offers daytime and evening classes, as well as one-on-one workshops. Daytime courses focus on industrial sewing skills, providing students with machines and training for industry jobs.

"Instead of buying an industrial machine that costs around \$1,000, we provide the machines so students can learn and decide if this is the path they want to pursue," explained Chris Horne, a training director at Esperanza Threads.

Evening classes cover specific areas of sewing, such as purse making and quilting. Students come to Esperanza Threads for various reasons—some want jobs, others are pursuing fashion, and some use sewing as therapy.

Open to the Public

Esperanza Threads hosts open sewing sessions on the first and third Saturday of every month. These sessions allow the public to work on projects, receive assistance, and use the equipment in the building.

The organization also operates a fabric store that supplies materials for classes and is open to the general public. Donations of clothes and materials are accepted, and items are offered at affordable prices.

Esperanza Threads plans to expand its space to include all forms of art, creating a community where individuals can thrive. For more information, visit Esperanza Threads.

<https://www.esperanzathreads.org>

*Sarai Murdock, born in New York and raised in Cleveland, is a local journalist, multi-disciplinary artist, and the young author of *Bully Free Zone: How to Stand Up for Yourself*.*



Esperanza Threads sewing machines for training refugees. Photo credit: Esperanza Threads

Ohio House Bill 187 Broadens Eligibility for Homestead Exemption Program



By Ron Calhoun

Ohio House Bill 187 has significant revisions to the Ohio Homestead Exemption Program, which has long provided property tax relief to qualifying seniors and disabled veterans. The bill aims to expand access to the program and modify how property assessments are conducted, with potential implications for homeowners across the state, particularly in Cuyahoga County.

Advocates and local lawmakers say the inaction is possibly due to infighting between Republican lawmakers at the top: House Speaker Jason Stephens (R-District 93) and Senate President Matt Huffman (R-Lima).

Background: Ohio Homestead Exemption Program

The Ohio Homestead Exemption Program was originally

designed to reduce the property tax burden for eligible seniors and disabled veterans by exempting a portion of their home's value from taxation. Also, to qualify for the exemption, a homeowner's income cannot exceed \$36,100 for tax year 2023.

Key Expansion Introduced by House Bill 187:

1. Increased Income Eligibility for Homestead Exemption
 - **Original Program:** The income threshold for the homestead exemption was capped at \$36,100, limiting access to property tax relief for many seniors and disabled veterans.
 - **Revised by HB 187:** The bill raises the income limit to \$75,000, allowing more seniors and disabled veterans to qualify for property tax relief under the program.
2. Changes to Property Tax Assessment Ratio Studies:
 - **Expanded Data: Under** the revised bill, the tax

commissioner must now consider all open-market, arms-length sales from the previous three years when conducting property tax sales assessment ratio studies, as opposed to relying on a smaller representative sample.

- **Equal Weighting:** Data from each of the three years will be given equal weight during the assessment process.
- **Impact on Valuations:** The changes are expected to moderate property value increases, resulting in lower property tax assessments for homeowners.

Potential Impact of the Revised Homestead Exemption for Cuyahoga County residents:

- **Direct Benefit:** Expanded income eligibility would significantly benefit seniors and disabled veterans in particularly in African American communities where many residents may now qualify for property tax relief.

- **Reduced Tax Burden:** Lower property taxes would increase disposable income for these households, improving financial stability.
- **Equity Considerations:** Despite the expanded eligibility, not all seniors or disabled veterans in these communities may qualify, which could create disparities.

Potential Impact of Changes to Assessment Ratio Studies:

- **Moderated Property Value Increases:** By averaging property values over three years, the bill aims to prevent sudden spikes in property assessments, which could be beneficial for homeowners in African American communities.
- **Long-term Effects:** The impact on property values and tax revenues for local governments remains uncertain, and further analysis is needed.

Overall Impact:


House Bill 187 represents a significant revision to the Ohio Homestead Exemption Program, potentially providing substantial property tax relief for many Ohio residents, particularly in densely populated areas like Cuyahoga County.

State Reps need to know you need help Call your elected representative. However, the overall impact will depend on the specific implementation of the bill, the economic conditions in the county, and the distribution of income levels within affected communities.

As the bill progresses, residents need to stay informed and consider how these changes might affect their financial situation.

State of Ohio Homestead Exemptions - FAQs

March 1, 2024
The Democratic Standard



Recent changes and current proposal:

- The annual increase to the amount of the exemption to account for inflation was enacted in the state operating budget (House Bill 33) in 2023.
- The Ohio Senate sent changes to H.B. 187 over to the Ohio House of Representatives that would provide a temporary (3-year) expanded homestead exemption. The bill would increase the amount of the exemption to \$30,000 (it would continue to increase annually based on inflation). It would also increase the income threshold to allow those with income up to \$75,000 to receive an exemption. The enhanced exemption would increase to \$60,000.
- The bill is currently waiting on the House to take the bill up for concurrence to approve or disapprove of the Senate changes.

Legal Aid Can Help With Employment-Related Legal Issues



By Tonya Sams

Millions of people report to work daily and don't know their employee rights. If their rights are violated, they may have to find an attorney. Employment law attorneys focus on work-related issues such as discrimination, wage theft, workers' compensation, expungements, unsafe working environments and more.

"Employees have the right to be treated fairly without being discriminated against. That's the

most important right," said Matt Alden, a senior attorney in Legal Aid's economic justice practice group.

"If they're a member of a union, they might have additional rights over and above what non-union members have."

Employment discrimination occurs when the employer treats an employee or applicant unfavorably. This could be based on race, sex, religious beliefs, age and disability. It also includes discrimination against veterans and those who have filed for bankruptcy or unemployment.

Workers who have been discriminated against, or have even faced retaliation for speaking out against unfairness,

have options for handling such situations. If an employee is a union member, they should contact their union representative to determine if a grievance can be filed. They should also look in their employee handbook to learn what their company states about discrimination complaints.

An employee, whether union or non-union, can also file a charge of discrimination on their own with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the Ohio Civil Rights Commission. There are other things that employees can do to protect themselves if they believe their rights have been violated. They should keep track of the dates incidents occurred, and keep all

paperwork, texts, or emails from their employer.

"This will help you later because sometimes you may not realize that you have a case. Your lawyer will ask you about incidents that may have happened six months or a year ago. And if you've written it down, it's a lot easier to go back and remember the full details," Alden said.

He that even if you don't believe you have enough evidence to prove your case, you should still get an attorney. Depending on the type of employment case, especially in wage theft cases, many attorneys will do it on a contingency fee basis. This means

Continued on page 7

Empowering Black Women in Politics: The Role of BWPAC in Cleveland



By Sheila Ferguson



“The door is ajar for future Black woman leadership.” -U.S. Rep. Shirley Anita Chisholm

Black women in Cleveland are deeply inspired by Vice President Kamala Harris’s historic run for president of the United States. Her candidacy is a powerful testament that Black women can aspire to the highest office in the land. The resonance of her campaign has sparked crucial questions about the political process.

Black women want to know the skills needed to embark on a winning political career, and they want to know the local insiders who can help. To get answers, The Cleveland Observer spoke with the leadership of the Black Women’s Political Action Committee: President Elaine Gohlstin, founding member and retired judge Patricia Ann Blackmon, and charter member Patricia Ivery.

“Chucks & Pearls Will Change the World in 2024”

The Black Women’s Political Action Committee, known as BWPAC, acknowledges the historical significance of Harris’ presidential run. BWPAC leaders describe it as a moment that sparks interest and inspiration. It presents a vision of what is possible when aspiring to political heights.

“It is a historic moment involving a woman of Black and southeast Asian ancestry, who has climbed the political ladder from San Francisco DA; attorney general [of the] State of California; U.S. Senator representing California’s 14th Congressional District,” Gohlstin said. “As a high-level political contender, she is empowered by the sitting president’s endorsement, her educational and professional experience, Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority membership and her hard work to become the 47th POTUS.”

The K-Hive social media hashtag, which supports Harris, echoes Gohlstin’s insights on the unique dynamics of this campaign. K-Hive also underscores the immense strengths of the Harris-Walz ticket and the specific challenges that a Black woman encounters when vying for an elected office.

Gohlstin describes the race as a master class in political campaigning due to its record-breaking funding from diverse

participants, including everyday individuals, celebrities and mega-donor billionaires. Despite Harris’s nationwide whistle-stop tours and outreach efforts, she continues to face discrimination based on race and gender.

BWPAC: the Penultimate Political Training Resource

BWPAC was founded in 1970 in Cleveland to help aspiring black female politicians. A nonpartisan organization, BWPAC offers crucial support for black women seeking elected political office. Foremost, it is a local political braintrust of black female political leaders. BWPAC’s collective knowledge of the political process is built into its training on political activism, voting rights, political campaign management, and fundraising assistance.

These services increase the likelihood of winning for black female political candidates.

“BWPAC efforts have also paved the way for future black women to enter politics. The support and mentorship available at BWPAC ensure that aspiring black female politicians are guided and encouraged every step of the way,” Gohlstin said.

Blackmon noted that “entering politics requires a heart for people and a firm conviction about liberty and justice for all.” With the mentorship of BWPAC, successful Black female politicians learn the “bread-and-butter skills” of political activism and community organizing, campaign operations, infrastructure building, fundraising, public relations and publicity generation to obtain political office.

BWPAC’s founders and membership are a “who’s who” of Cleveland’s most accomplished Black women in politics. The list includes the likes of judges Jean Murrell Capers and Sarah Harper; and State Representatives Vermel Whalen, Barbara Boyd, Annie Keyes and Juanita Brent. Also noted is Stephanie Howse-Jone’s movement from state representative to representing Ward 7, Cleveland City Council.

U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia L. Fudge, Congresswoman Shontel Brown and Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones (deceased) are BWPAC members on the national stage.

Members have contributed to and benefitted from BWPAC’s brain trust and resources.

“Their efforts have also paved the way for this moment in history with V.P. Harris,” Blackmon said.

BWPAC’s Political Career Support Activities

BWPAC offers a number of activities aimed at aspiring Black women politicians, including political skills and campaign-readiness workshops.

“BWPAC volunteers gain the ability to successfully campaign and acquire new expertise as political strategists, campaign managers, press secretaries, political historians, special events coordinators and journalists,” Gohlstin said.

Mandate for the Future

Gohlstin, Blackmon, and Ivery agreed that “BWPAC’s development of Black women

leaders assures a pipeline for women of color’s entry into politics. It also keeps the civil rights agenda at the forefront of service for all.” BWPAC leadership said the organization’s model has been so successful that political women nationwide have asked to duplicate it.

To learn more about BWPAC, call Gohlstin at 216-780-7584.

Dr. Sheila Ferguson’s published literary works span the realm of scholarly and technical writing to playwriting, memoirs and creative non-fiction.

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988

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- Any other kind of emotional distress

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Legal Aid Can Help From page 6

it will not cost the employee anything to have a consultation and have an attorney handle their case. In some cases the law provides provisions that if the employee’s case is successful, the employer may be required to pay the attorney.

“Two lawyers can look at the same case and sometimes come up with two different opinions on how strong it is, so it’s always worth it to get another opinion. You may have claims that you don’t even know about,” Alden

said. “Another lawyer might think that you’ve got a viable claim that’s very strong and you may not. You just never know, especially if you’re not a lawyer. You’re not trained to know what to look for.”

If workers are experiencing employment-related issues, Legal Aid may be able to help. To apply for assistance, call 888-817-3777, or complete an online intake 24/7 at lasclev.org.

Tonya Sams is a communications manager at Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Project 2025 Pushes to Diminish College Affordability



By Michael Patterson

Public Service Loan Forgiveness and the Saving on A Valuable Education Program are at risk in this presidential election. If former President Trump is elected and his administration allows Project 2025 to go into effect, paying for college could become more difficult.

What is Project 2025?

Project 2025 is a 922-page presidential transition project proposed by the Heritage Foundation. It also proposes several guidelines like ending student loan forgiveness and giving states more control over funds used for education.

Mindy Peden, a political science professor at John Carroll University, spoke briefly about the project.

"I can understand why they like the idea, you know, and that there's a sense that you would get some kind of diversity," said Peden. She also expressed that public education needs reform.

Financing college education under Project 2025

Let's dive into the specific effects of the project regarding public service loan forgiveness (PSLF). This loan forgiveness cancels a borrower's balance after they've made 120 direct loan payments while working full-time for a government job, or a nonprofit organization. The only loans that are eligible for this are direct loans although federal loans can be consolidated into a direct consolidation loan. To apply for this loan forgiveness you must submit a PSLF application and Employment Certification form.

There's a good example from americanprogress.org that shows how this works. Imagine Kenny, a full-time teacher at a public school has a debt of \$70,000 in direct loans. After making 120 payments and simultaneously working for 10 years, he applied for PSLF, and his employment is verified. Since his employment was verified the remaining \$17,500 of their debt would be canceled. Kenny would be able to keep on teaching without the burden of student loan debt because of the PSLF program.

Project 2025 would eliminate or reduce this program. A teacher like Kenny would still have to worry about paying their remaining balances, no matter how much time he works as a teacher. It would actively work against the financial

benefits that the PSLF brings.

However, the project is proposing more state control according to <https://www.project2025.org/policy/>. That could help teachers focus more on teaching skills and build teaching styles tailored to their specific students. Putting educational funds in control of the state could also result in higher teacher salaries and better resources for specific community needs.



Project 2025 Could Cripple the SAVE Plan

The project doesn't only affect public service loan forgiveness, but borrowers under the Saving on a Valuable Education Plan will also suffer financially. According to studentaid.gov, the SAVE plan is an income-driven repayment plan based on a borrower's monthly payment on their income. It also stops a borrower's debt from growing because of interest.

Project 2025 works directly against that because student loan payments would nearly triple for graduates with a bachelor's degree according to americanprogress.org. Decreasing federal control over education could bring inconsistencies in the plan which could create disparities in access to the SAVE plan's benefits. So much inconsistency could impact the resources students use to finance college.

However, the project could enhance resources like the SAVE plan by increasing states' control. Decreasing Washington's intervention in funding is a part of the plan's priorities according to <https://www.project2025.org/policy/>. Granting states full control over education funding could improve financial aid policies to fulfill regional needs. Less federal oversight could also free up more resources to support students, creating new ways to manage student loans.

Cleveland students have help paying for College

With the effects on student loan repayment laid out, let's shift focus to resources that make college affordable for Cleveland students. The average student loan debt in Ohio is approximately \$34,000, according to educationdata.org. Students at several local universities have opportunities to fight against possible rising college expenses.

Vice President for Enrollment Management at John Carroll University spoke about bringing college education to lower-income students.

"This is one of the central tenets of our Mosaic initiative...We have pursued and received grant funding for last dollar, need-based scholarships such as through the National Science Foundation where last year we received the largest S-STEM grant in Ohio." Sorg remarked.

Cleveland State University automatically considers incoming freshmen for scholarships as well. Their institutional scholarships for Ohio freshmen can be as much as \$40,000. More information can be found with a phone call to CSU.

According to Center for American Progress, if Congress approves the guidelines of Project 2025, borrowers won't have the chance to have Direct Loans forgiven.

Syntrell Thompson, a senior at Kent State University talked about the possibility of having fewer financial aid resources.

"I honestly feel it's an unfortunate situation for students because it reduces the help and support we need." Thompson said.

Michael Patterson is currently a senior at John Carroll University studying digital media. He loves basketball, mixed martial arts, and football, and aspires to become a sports reporter or commentator.

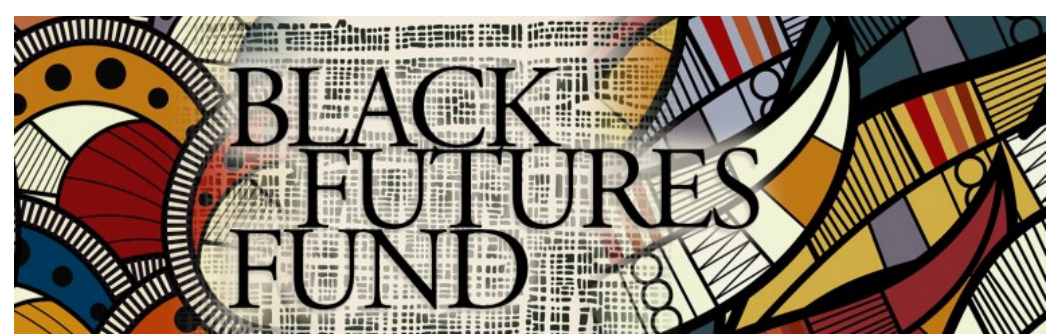
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Supreme Court Overturns ATF Ban on Bump Stocks, Ohio Picks Up the Fight



Staff Writer

In a 6-3 decision on June 14, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms (ATF) and Explosives' ban on bump stocks, a firearm accessory that enables semi-automatic weapons to fire at rates similar to automatic weapons. The ruling, *Garland v. Cargill*, marks a significant shift in gun regulation, overturning a policy enacted during the Trump administration.

The court's decision allows bump stocks to be legally purchased unless banned by a specific state. The ruling has sparked widespread debate with critics arguing it undermines public safety.

The ATF ban on bump stocks was a direct response to the October 1, 2017, mass shooting

in Las Vegas, the deadliest in U.S. history. The shooter used bump stocks to modify his weapons, enabling them to fire like machine guns, resulting in the deaths of 60 people and injuries to hundreds more.

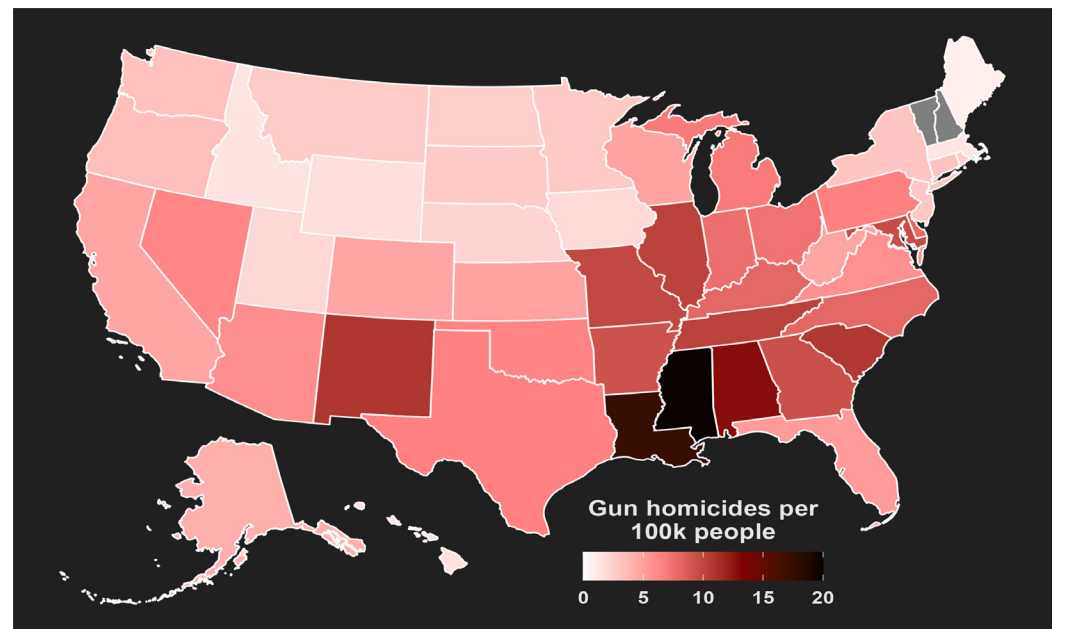
In response to the Supreme Court ruling, Ohio Sen. Kent Smith has championed Senate Bill 307, which seeks to ban bump stocks in the state. The bill has garnered bipartisan support, with legislators from both parties introducing similar measures in Congress. Currently, bump stocks are illegal in more than a dozen states, including those led by Republican governors.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor, in her dissent, sharply criticized the decision, writing: Editor's note: "When I see a bird that walks like a duck, swims like a duck, and quacks like a duck, I call that a duck. A bump stock-equipped semi-automatic rifle fires automatically more than one shot without manual reloading by a single function of the trigger. Like Congress, I call that a machine gun."

While opponents view the ruling as a setback for public safety, supporters of SB 307 hope the legislation will address the issue at the state level. The coming months will reveal how Ohio representatives and the broader legislative community respond to this contentious issue.



Ohio Senate District 21 Senator Kent Smith



Map of US states by gun homicide rate in 2021. Data are from the CDC and are for the year 2021. [1] Rates are per 100,000 inhabitants. Author: Wizmut, Creative Commons CC0 License;

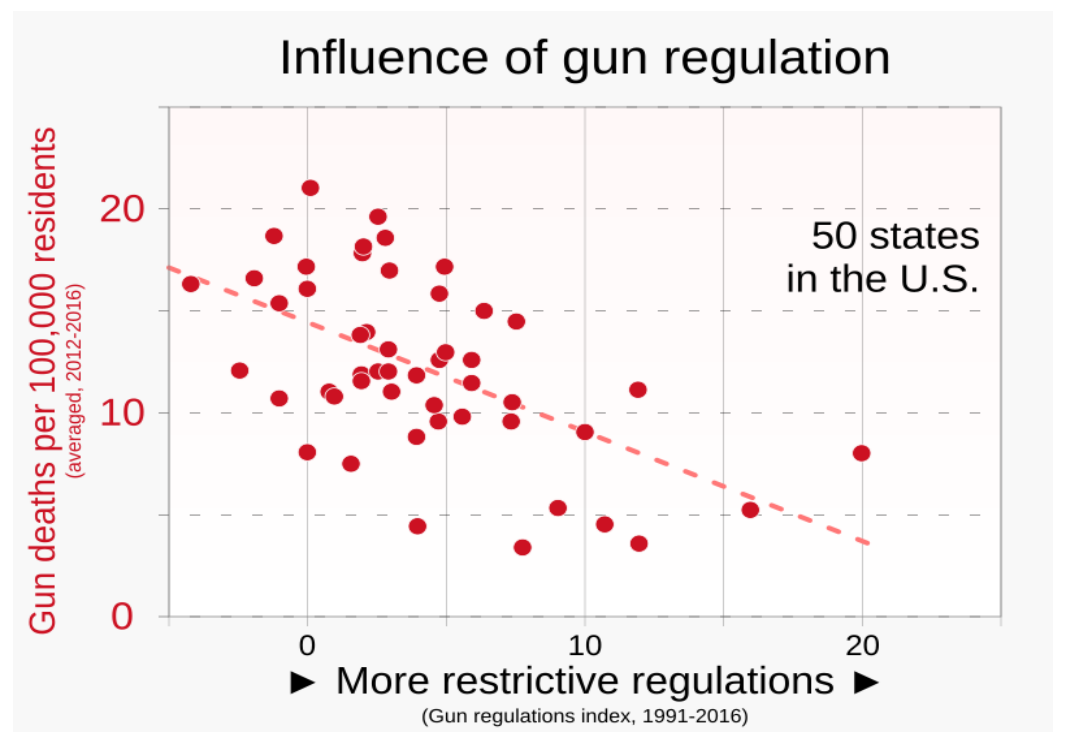
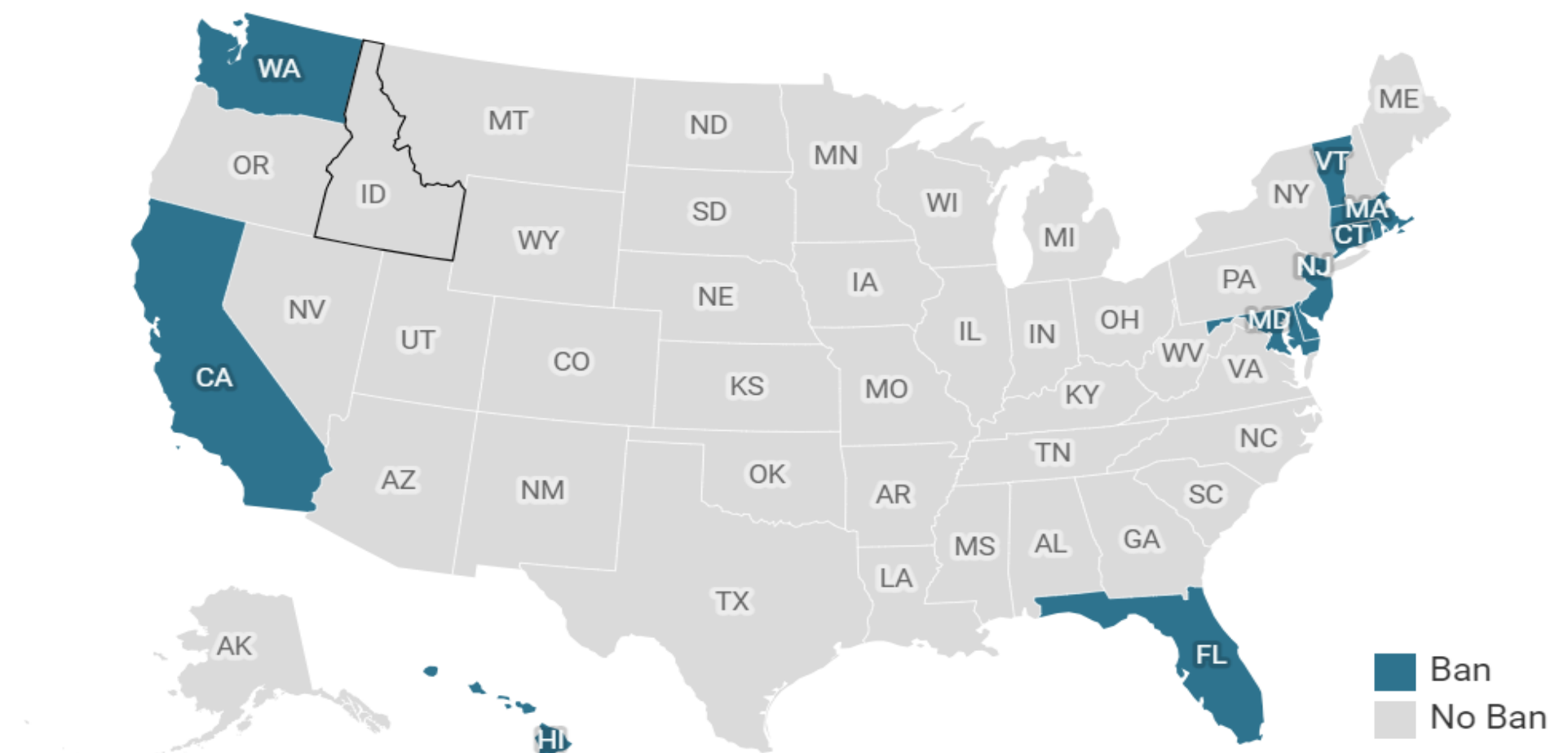


Chart showing gun death rates in US states as a function of gun regulation index for those states. Author: RCraig09, Creative Commons CC0 License;

States With A Ban On Bump Stocks

States with a ban on gun accessories that speed up the rate of fire, allowing the gun to pump out bullets faster.



Map: Guns & America • Get the data • Created with Datawrapper

Opinion: Kamala Harris is Qualified—But Are We Ready for a Black, Female President?



Editor's note: The views expressed are those of the writer and not representative of The Cleveland Observer.

By Imani Capri

Democracy at a Crossroads

As the U.S. gears up for the General Election in November, Vice President Kamala Harris is poised to receive the Democratic presidential nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois, from August 19-22. This historic event will unite more than 4,000 delegates to recognize Harris and approve the party's platform. The convention will feature prominent speakers, including former President Barack Obama and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, emphasizing the significance of this moment in American history.

Harris' nomination underscores a powerful theme that runs through American history and politics: Black women have consistently been the backbone of progress in this country. From enduring slavery, working in the fields, and nursing children, to leading during Reconstruction and the Civil Rights Movement, Black women have been pillars of strength. They have held families together and loyally supported the Democratic Party, influencing Joe Biden's decision to choose Kamala Harris as his vice-presidential running mate.

Harris' rise to political power is a continuation of Black women's fight for change on behalf of all Americans. She follows in

the footsteps of trailblazers like Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman to run for U.S. president; Barbara Jordan, the first Black woman elected to Congress from the South since 1898; and Karen Bass, the first Black woman to serve as mayor of Los Angeles.

As the highest-ranking female official in U.S. history, Harris is the first African-American and Asian-American vice president and has served as a U.S. senator, California attorney general, and San Francisco district attorney. Despite her extensive qualifications, one key question looms over the election:

Is America ready to elect its first Black female president?

The Readiness of America

Ohio State Senator Kent Smith is confident that the country is prepared. "Yes, I think America is ready. The Obama presidency helped pave the way for VP Harris. Obama was well-spoken, smart, and scandal-free, so there was no buyer's remorse for the average voter. VP Harris is better qualified now than Barack was in 2008, so I think she will win and serve well," Smith said. He also noted that while racism still exists, more than half of the electorate has grown up with the Civil Rights Movement as part of their history, making the idea of a woman or Black president less of a stretch.

Fairview Park entrepreneur Lisette Lopez Bryson echoes this sentiment, arguing that the collective trauma of recent years has made the country more ready for change. "Politics has always been viewed as a man's job, and while hurdles are still higher for Black women than white women, we are ready! This is not 2016. We've evolved and grown as a

society. We're ready to focus on real issues like education, affordable healthcare, and housing for all, while protecting the environment and women's rights."

President Joe Biden's decision to step aside and nominate Harris as the Democratic candidate has invigorated the Democratic Party. Jotaka Eaddy, founder of #WinWithBlackWomen, mobilized a coalition of Black women leaders who raised over \$1 million for Harris within hours of Biden's announcement. Other groups, such as #WinWithBlackMen, White Women for Harris, and Latinas for Harris, followed suit. The coalition supporting Harris is diverse and growing, with her campaign raising \$200 million within a week and \$310 million in June alone. Polls from The New York Times/Siena College show Harris with a slight national lead.

Overcoming Racism and Sexism

Despite these positive indicators, racism and sexism remain potent forces in American politics. Republican candidate Donald Trump and his running mate, J.D. Vance, have employed dog whistles to undermine Harris. Trump questioned Harris' "Blackness" during an interview, likening his comments to the birther movement that challenged Barack Obama's citizenship. Trump's mispronunciation of Harris' name and Vance's sexist comparisons only reinforce the obstacles Harris faces.

Vance recently compared Harris to Jeffrey Epstein in a Fox News interview, an ironic attack given Trump's association with Epstein's former jet. Such tactics reveal the depths to



Vice President Kamala Harris and Democratic Presidential Nominee

which opponents will sink rather than offering substantive policy discussions.

The Bigger Picture

This election is about more than just the candidates. It's a referendum on the soul of America. Will the nation succumb to the old energy of racism, misogyny, and the erosion of rights, or will it embrace a future grounded in democracy, inclusivity, and fairness?

Cynthia Gale, an artist and former dean from Chagrin Falls, believes the country is ready for change. "The overwhelming response to Kamala Harris' nomination shows that America is more than ready for a Black female president. I believe this young democracy has reached a point where inclusivity, compassion, fairness, and kindness can prevail."

As we approach the election, the choice is clear: Will we continue to be held back by prejudice, or will we finally realize the promise of democracy for all?

Imani Capri is the Managing Editor for The Cleveland Observer and a motivational speaker, international best-selling author, and award-winning podcast host.

Who Is Kamala Harris?

Facts about U.S. vice president and possible presidential nominee Kamala Harris



Full name: Kamala Devi Harris
Born: October 20, 1964, in Oakland, CA to immigrant parents from Chennai, India and Jamaica
Honors: Thurgood Marshall Award, honorary doctorates from the University of Southern California/Howard University

- Up to 1989** Degrees in political science (Howard University) and law (Hastings College)
- 1990-2010** Prosecuting attorney/district attorney in Oakland and San Francisco
- 2011-2016** Attorney general of California
- 2017-2021** United States senator
- 2019** Harris launches presidential campaign but withdraws before the primaries
- Since 2021** 49th vice president of the United States
- 2024** Harris seeks Democratic nomination for the 2024 presidential race

Photo: Wikipedia
 Sources: Encyclopædia Britannica, media reports



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'The Journey: A Place to Call Our Own'



SCAN TO LISTEN

By Lavita Ewing

"The Journey: A Place To Call Our Own," a documentary chronicling the story of the African American Cultural Garden, located within the Cleveland Cultural Gardens, will be shown at the Atlas Theatre on Shaker Square on Sunday, Sept. 22, at 4:15 p.m. as part of the Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival.

"We are excited about this opportunity for the story of the African American Cultural Garden to be told to a broader audience," said Carl Ewing, president of the Association of African American Cultural Gardens. "I believe the story will inspire the support needed to complete the Garden."

"The Journey: A Place To Call Our Own" recounts the struggle of Black Americans in Cleveland as they sought space within the historic Cultural Gardens in Rockefeller Park. The Cleveland Cultural Gardens, established in 1926, celebrate the city's multi-ethnic heritage and aim to promote

ethnic pride and intercultural understanding.

Despite African American migrants becoming the largest working-class population in Cleveland, the gardens initially lacked representation for Black Clevelanders. However, after 16 years of dedication, hard work, and resilience, the African American Cultural Garden was finally acquired in 1977.

This story and the struggles in the 47 years since to design and fund construction for the garden are told by contemporaries or surviving relatives of the primary drivers of the journey in this documentary, and those currently involved.

"The journey to secure the land and build the Garden is truly a story of determination and resilience, parallel to the story of ancestors forging through the Middle Passage, chattel slavery, Jim Crow and the fight for Civil Rights," said Ewing.

Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at www.gcuff.com.

Sun, Sept 22, 4:15 p.m. at Atlas Shaker Square - Theater 4

Mon, Sept 23, 4:00 p.m. at Atlas



Shaker Square - Theater 2

ABOUT THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL GARDENS

The Association of African American Cultural Gardens (AAACG) is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the completion and maintenance of the African American Cultural Garden which is located within the Cleveland Cultural Garden Federation. AAACG has been the sponsoring organization for the African American Cultural Garden since 2012. The mission of the AAACG is to educate the public regarding the African American experience and to complete the monument for the African American Cultural Garden.

ABOUT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL GARDEN

The African American Cultural Garden is one of more than 38 established or planned ethnic cultural gardens that are part of the 100-year-old Cleveland Cultural Gardens, located in Rockefeller Park on the east side of Cleveland, and its representative organization, the Cleveland Cultural Garden Federation. The land for the African American Cultural Garden was dedicated in 1977 and has been added to the African American Civil Rights Network.

Lavita Ewing is a member of African American Cultural Gardens Board of Directors.

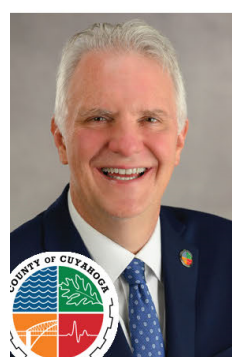
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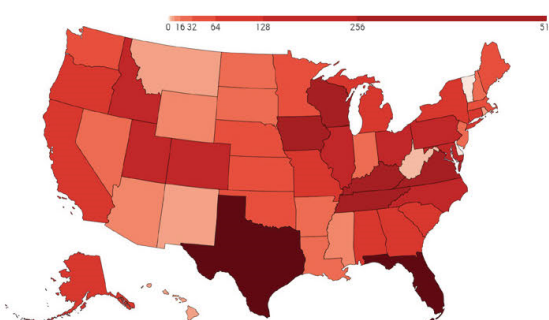
A Message from County Executive Chris Ronayne

Cuyahoga Reads participants have been reading throughout the year! To date, 18,121 registered participants have completed 59,016,240 minutes, exceeding our goal of 5,000,000. The reading excitement doesn't end there - September is Library Card Sign-Up Month! Visit your local public library to renew or register for a new library card. Also, don't forget that September 22-28 is Banned Books Week. This week is a great opportunity to help our County libraries protect the right to read by borrowing a book.

Titles Challenged in Public Schools and Libraries During 2023

- Attempts to censor books during this period: 938
- Total titles challenged in those attempts: 9,021
- Unique Titles: 4,240

Data Compiled by: American Library Association - Office for Intellectual Freedom



Freed Between The Lines

by Cuyahoga Reads Committee



The number of titles targeted for censorship surged by 65% in 2023

compared to years prior, reaching the highest levels ever documented by the American Library Association. Pressure groups in 2023 focused mostly on public libraries in addition to targeting school libraries. The number of titles targeted for censorship at public libraries increased by 92% over the previous year; school libraries saw an 11% increase. This Banned Books Week, take a moment to think about how life would be different without some of the most renowned stories and titles throughout the history of literature. 📖

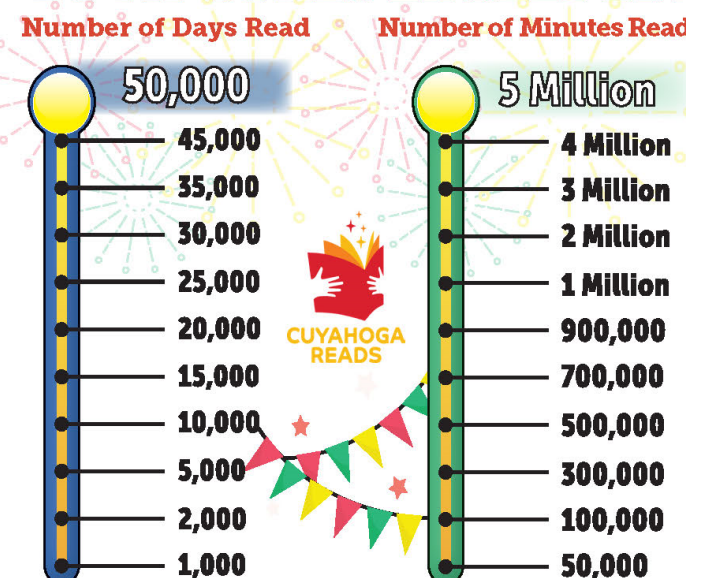
Cuyahoga Reads Literacy Tips



Library Card Sign-Up Month is an annual campaign sponsored by the American Library Association to encourage readers of all ages to sign-up for a free library card. This September, "the American Library Association (ALA) is teaming up with multi-platform entertainment company Skybound Entertainment and leading toy and game company Hasbro to encourage people to roll out to their libraries with the TRANSFORMERS franchise, featuring Optimus Prime, as part of Library Card Sign-Up Month." To learn more about Library Card Sign-Up Month, visit cuyahogareads.org.



BOTH GOALS EXCEEDED!



DeWine Criticizes Proposed Redistricting Amendment, Calls for Nonpartisan Reform



Staff Writer

COLUMBUS, Ohio (TCO) — Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine voiced concerns over a proposed constitutional amendment (Citizens Not Politicians Amendment/Issue 1) on this fall's ballot, arguing that it would fail to eliminate gerrymandering and instead exacerbate the problem.

Gerrymandering is when voting district boundaries are drawn with the intention of influencing who gets elected. Instead of Voters choosing the representative, representatives choose their voters

Despite bipartisan support for the current redistricting provisions, DeWine criticized the existing process as ineffective and called for changes to ensure fair representation.

The governor warned that Issue 1, which aims to reduce gerrymandering, could lead to even more extreme gerrymandered districts. He expressed concern that if the amendment passes, voters may become disillusioned with the process, leading to further demands for reform in the future.

DeWine attempted to gaslight Ohioans into thinking that the citizen commission plan would lead to the worst gerrymandering Ohio has ever seen, after DeWine joined Statehouse Republicans in forcing voters to cast ballots in 2022 under the worst gerrymandered maps Ohio has ever seen.

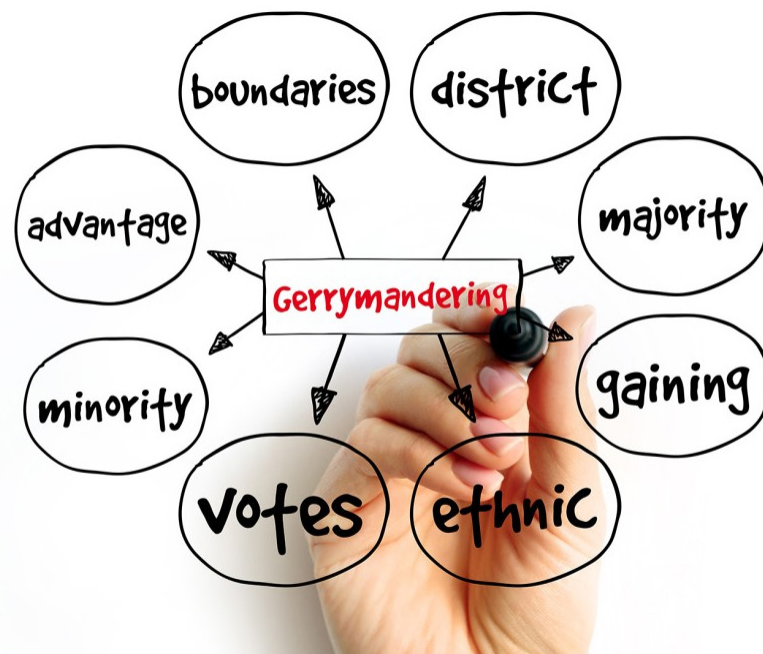
The governor advocated for a system that removes politics from the map-drawing process. He suggested that maps should

be based solely on population and avoid splitting political subdivisions like cities and counties. DeWine pointed to Iowa's Redistricting Plan 2 Bill's successful use of such a system for over 40 years as a model Ohio could adopt.

The "Iowa plan" emphasizes that districts be compact and contiguous and preserve political subdivisions. It prohibits intentionally favoring a party, incumbent, person or group by disallowing political data from being used in map-drawing, but it should be noted that it's fairly simple to draw a heavily politicized map by just using geography and not data.

DeWine also criticized Issue 1's emphasis on "proportionality," arguing that while it may sound fair, it could undermine other important considerations, such as maintaining community boundaries and ensuring minority representation. He cautioned that prioritizing proportionality could compromise good governance and lead to unintended consequences.

Former Ohio Supreme Court Justice Maureen O'Connor, who supports the amendment, released a statement criticizing DeWine's



interpretation of the amendment:

"The disinformation from the Governor today is insulting to everyone in Ohio, and especially insulting to the half a million Ohioans — Republicans, Democrats and Independents — who put the Citizens Not Politicians Amendment on the November ballot.

Gov. DeWine voted with his fellow politicians seven times for unconstitutional maps, and now says what Ohio really needs is what he calls 'The Iowa Plan,' a system where the Governor and other politicians get the final say on maps.

For nearly a year, we have been publicly collecting signatures

in all 88 counties and now – 97 days before the election – he tells Ohioans that he and his friends in the legislature are already scheming to overturn what voters will pass in November. We're done listening to self-serving politicians tell us how they want to keep rigging the game. On to November.

Since the Governor demonstrated in his rambling and disjointed press conference today that he does not understand our amendment, I am offering to sit down and meet with him to explain it."

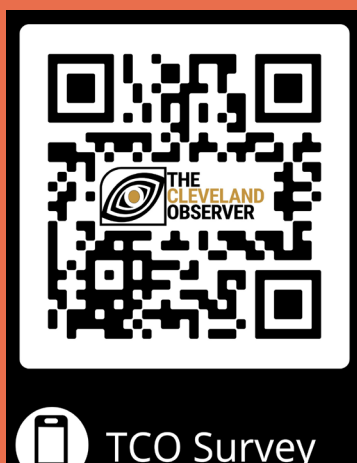
The contents of this writing are intended for general information purposes only and should not be construed as legal advice or opinion in any specific facts or circumstances

Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission

<https://citizensnotpoliticians.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/CNP-Amendment-for-Web.pdf>

Legislative Guide to Redistricting in Iowa
<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LG/9461.pdf>

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